

USAWC hosts Penn State students for negotiations exercise

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33 students from Penn State University took part in an International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise Feb. 2-5 at the Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership. The exercise challenges the students to use their negotiation and communication skills to help solve real-world conflicts. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

Feb. 3, 2012 -- The International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise confronted 33 Penn State students with the challenges of a tough, real-world, stalemated conflict Feb. 2-5.

The program challenged the students by assigning each of them to one of seven country-teams, represented participants at a mock UN-sponsored conference called to address a series of international events. The students are members of the Penn State University Presidential Leadership Academy.

“I really wanted to take part in this program to help develop my negotiation skills,” said Sarah Espinoza, advertising major. “The skills I help hone here by taking part in this exercise can really be applied to any situation.”

“For me, being able to expand my experiences by taking part in this program is really valuable,” said Jordan Rolon, a recreation, park, and tourism management major. “In my future career and internships I will need to be able to effectively communicate with groups that come from all different backgrounds and perspectives. This exercise has already helped me see how important our own filters can be when we approach an issue and how that needs to be taken into consideration by both parties.”

The program also exposes these students to the military, many of them for the first time.

“I think it’s extremely valuable to see how the military trains and conducts exercises,” said Espinoza. “We don’t get this type of experience in school and I think it will be extremely valuable for me in the future.”

“I wanted to take part in this because I’ve never been exposed to the military and I think it’s important to have at least a basic understanding of how the military operates and approaches different issues and challenges,” said Christian Heliman, a broadcast journalism major. “This program will help me develop my communication skills and expand my experiences which I hope pay off in the future.”

A CSL team develops the scenarios, maps, background information, and the special -- and confidential -- instructions that each team will follow to negotiate an effective outcome. As the exercise unfolds, each team develops a strategy and works to negotiate the best solution to the conflict based on the scenario and instructions from their governments.

During their three days here, the students participate in negotiation sessions, toured the Army Heritage and Education Center and spoke with career diplomats and regional experts who coach and mentor each team through the diplomatic process.